

## The Pleasure, the Privilege is Mine by moonflowers

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**Summary:**

In a turn of events no one expected, Billy says it first.

## The Pleasure, the Privilege is Mine

### Author's Note:

Title from There is a Light that Never Goes Out by The Smiths. Before you worry, no one dies and this fic is just as floofy as ever. Just every time it comes on my Spotify it makes me think of the boys.

You don't need to have read the other two parts of the series - all you gotta know is Billy and Steeb have been together a little while, and the former knows a bit about the Upside Down after having helped out in a surprise demodog fight.

Billy Hargrove could sleep like the fucking dead. Steve had only learnt this recently, although it had been what? two months, no almost three, since they'd started doing this thing. *Dating*. Though it was significantly less than that that they'd actually acknowledged that's what they were doing out loud. And despite all of it, they'd still only slept in the same bed the whole night through a handful of times. Billy's dad was a hardass, who kept Billy under curfew for no reason other than he felt like it, sometimes. When Steve's parents were actually home, they tried to make up for their absences by not giving him a moment alone. There were late night babysitting duties, and early mornings for school, or nights when one or both of them couldn't get to sleep in the first place. Sometimes Billy just needed to be alone. More often than not, it was a two minute breather after a messy fumble in one of their cars before they went their separate ways, or a quick nap just long enough for the afterglow to wear off before Billy climbed back out of Steve's bedroom window. So yeah, waking up next to Billy on a quiet morning in an empty house and no time limit hanging over their heads wasn't something he'd been able to enjoy all that often.

Steve was a different matter though. He was always up early these days, even though he'd really rather not be, restless and fidgety. As he'd known he would be, given how damn early it was, Billy was still asleep. The morning sun was coming in through the pale curtains of Steve's bedroom, and casting him gold. He watched him for a

moment, the slow in and out of his breath, the softness of his face where it was pressed into the pillow, hands slack on the sheets. But soon enough the familiar restlessness crept in and set him on edge, and he had to get up. Billy stirred a little when Steve got out of bed, shifting to sprawl out on his front, hugging Steve's pillow close. Steve laughed at himself for being so fucking unbearably happy over the mere sight of him - Billy would definitely laugh his ass off too if Steve ever told him that - and went downstairs.

He didn't smoke a lot, and if he did it was usually with Billy, the two of them passing the cigarette back and forth at lunch, or on a clear night up by the quarry, fingers touching very much on purpose when they passed it between them. But there was something about the burn of it on a cold, bright morning, the taste of it in the back of his throat, that felt pretty fucking good. He stood out back in his briefs and an old t shirt and smoked, bare arms and legs prickling with cold, but it was the same kind of shouldn't-feel-good-but-did sensation as the early morning cigarettes.

It wasn't long before the inevitable happened, and he heard the slap of Billy's bare feet on the tiles behind him. He didn't turn, waited for Billy to loop his arms around him from behind, hands big and hot where they rested on Steve's belly, nosing into his hair and grumbling softly into his neck.

"We could still be in bed y'know." He smelt like sleep, warm sheets and cooled sweat.

"You can go back up, if you want," Steve said, even though he knew he wouldn't.

"Nah," Billy said, took the cigarette from Steve's fingers and brought it to his own lips. Steve heard him take a drag on it, heard him huff back out, saw the smoke skitter away from them. "You've got the cigarettes, baby."

Steve saw him flick away the loose ash from the tip out of the corner of his eye before he handed it back up to Steve, the end of it damp. "Mmm," he took it, "I guess I do."

His chest was warm against Steve's back, chin digging in where he rested it on his shoulder, breath tickling Steve's ear. The trees were

starting to green up again, mornings brighter and evenings longer. Things weren't perfect, Steve knew better than to expect that now, but they were *good*, better than good. And there were moments, like the one he was in right then, that he was aware of a quiet sort of contentment he'd almost forgotten how to feel heavy in his chest, the feeling that things just might turn out okay.

One of Billy's hands had snuck lower, a finger toying with the waistband of Steve's underwear, dipping inside, lifting it away and letting it snap softly back against his skin. He huffed out a laugh and pressed back into him. "I guess we can go back to bed for a little while," he said, shifting around to palm at a handful of Billy's ass, "if you want."

#

Steve found he slept a little easier, if, every now and then, he took it upon himself to go out and check things over. Kept an ear out for anything out of the ordinary, missing pets or strange plant infestations, and went to have a snoop around. Some might've called it looking for trouble, but he preferred to think of it as being cautious. Which was complete bullshit, but it made him feel better, so he wasn't going to argue the finer points. Billy came with him, now he knew what Steve was up to. He said it was because he didn't want Steve to go alone, which probably did have some truth to it. But after their last accidental run in with the band of demodogs that Billy had helped him take out, Steve had a feeling he enjoyed having something socially acceptable to beat the crap out of.

There'd been reports of a group of stray dogs at the edge of town, the shitty end, a sprawling, scrubby area of boarded up stores and mostly empty houses, left to rot when other parts of town had been developed in the fifties. They'd been sighted, apparently, at the fringe of the woods by the old hardware store, one of the few places that end of town still in business, old and falling apart and creepy as fuck. Why anyone still even went there was beyond Steve.

"Did I ever tell you, sweetheart," Billy said, leaning against the grimy side wall of the store, hip cocked and cigarette in hand, looking exactly the sort of boy girls' mamas warned them about, "how much I like watching you swing that big ol' bat of yours around?"

Billy was in that sort of mood, the one where he wanted to get a rise out of him, good or bad, and blatant flirting was always his first port of call. It was something he did sometimes, when he was feeling nervous or uncertain, in a transparent attempt to try and shift the focus away from it. Steve was feeling strung tight enough himself to go along with it, knew he could give Billy as good as he got. And they had a good couple of hours to kill looking out for signs of the 'dogs before they'd call it a night, and he needed a distraction. "You might have mentioned it once or twice," he said, spinning it in his hand for good measure, "which I got to be honest baby, sorta surprised me."

"Oh?" Billy said around his cigarette, raised an eyebrow. "You think I don't like a bad boy just as much as everybody else?"

"No it's not that," Steve said, drawing up close, moving into his space, "just that the first time you saw this bat, your little sister nearly took your balls off with it. Kind of a boner killer."

Billy laughed, loud and pleased, like he did whenever Steve cut loose and dealt back Billy's snark and teasing right in his face, that 'fire' he always claimed to be on the watch for. "It should be," he said, "but for whatever reason pretty boy, it still revs me up."

"Shut up," Steve said, the default when he didn't know what else the fuck to say, and crowded Billy right up against the wall. He took the almost burnt out end of Billy's cigarette, and dropped it to the ground. He didn't kiss him straight away, just let his breath run hot over Billy's lips, felt Billy tense in anticipation underneath him. Then he ran out of patience and shoved forward to kiss Steve, quick little biting kisses that had him curling his hands tight into Billy's jacket, chasing after his mouth.

Something clanged across the street, a metallic clatter followed by a yowl that had them scrambling apart, Steve holding his bat ready to strike. It was a cat. A small, dusty looking cat, who'd knocked the lid off a rusting trash can.

"Shit," Steve said, breathing heavy, and pushed his hair back from his face. "Maybe we should uh, take a look around, or something." Honestly he just needed to cool the fuck off. They weren't there to make out, they were there to... well, he didn't know the night might

throw at them exactly, if anything at all, but if he let his guard down for a moment and something happened, he'd never forgive himself.

Billy snorted, pushed himself away from the wall and slung the crowbar over his shoulder. "What ever you say, King Steve," he said, and gave Steve's ass a smack for good measure before he sauntered off around the corner towards the back. Steve hadn't really expected him to actually do what he asked, and it left him with no choice but to do the same. Grip tightening on the bat, he set off in the opposite direction around the edge of the hardware store. He'd barely taken a few steps before Billy called out to him.

"Steve!" His voice was pitched higher than normal, a slight waver to it, and Steve knew whatever he'd found it couldn't be good. "You'd better come look at this."

He jogged back the way he came and around the corner to find Billy looking warily at the back doors of the store. Or what was left of them anyway; the metal doors has been torn apart, one clawed right off the hinges, padlock twisted up and useless, long gouges scraped out in the concrete either side.

"Oh shit," something clattered and echoed inside the store, and it wasn't until then that Steve realised he hadn't actually been expecting there to be something wrong. The shock of it caught hard and cold in his chest, like jumping into icy water. "We'd uh, we'd better go check it out." He knew they'd probably get shouted out by at least six different people for not calling for back up, but the radio was in his car and they'd stupidly driven over in Billy's, and he wasn't about to take the chance that whatever was inside the store could escape. Billy nodded tightly, hefted the crowbar up, and gestured for Steve to go first.

"I got your back."

Steve shot him one last look before he went in, a look that he hoped said be careful, don't get hurt, and I'm so fucking glad you're here with me all in one.

It didn't take them long to find them. To start with they were fucking noisy - hissing at each other and making that goddamn horrible

clicking, rattling noise that kept Steve awake at night, and they'd knocked over a rack of screwdrivers. As soon as Billy and Steve rounded the corner, the demodogs were on them. They seemed smaller, weaker, than the ones they'd seen before, thin and scrawny looking. But there was at least five of them, and they looked fucking *hungry*, ribs jutting out and thick saliva dripping from their flower-petal faces.

"Shit shit shit," Steve said as the first one rushed at them, hands sweaty on the handle of the bat as he swung, the satisfying thwack as it connected with the demodog's side and making the rest screech and run at them.

"Take that, you bitch!" he heard Billy yell next to him as he slammed another of the 'dogs down, knocking a shelf full of paintbrushes to the floor in the process.

Steve laughed, a little madly, and felt himself settle into the sharp details and white noise that came with the haze of a fight. The demodogs were a little on the small side, sure, but they were still quick and full of teeth and claws, starving and desperate to take a bite out of them. And while they'd managed to take out one or two, another couple had appeared from between the shelves, claws clacking on the concrete floor. He heard Billy hoot in victory somewhere off to his left and grinned to himself. It was so easy. Too easy, and he should have seen it coming. Breathing ragged, Steve took another swing at the closest 'dog. He made the hit, but when he pulled the bat free of its slimy body, he misjudged and yanked too hard, swinging the crooked nails of the bat into a shelf stocked with cans of paint. They pierced right through the side of the can and got caught in the metal.

"Fuck," he tried to tug it free, but only succeeded in pulling the can right off the shelf, bat still stuck in it as it fell to the floor and the lid popped off, sending bright yellow paint everywhere. "Shit! Come on." He kicked at the now almost empty can, but only managed to spatter more paint everywhere, the smell thick and cloying alongside the putrid smell of the demodogs, and it made his head spin.

"Steve!"

Distracted as he was, Steve didn't see the 'dog jumping right at him until Billy shoulder barged it out of the way, smashing it with the crowbar when it went down, dark green-grey goop mixing with the paint pooling on the floor. Distracted as they both were, neither of them saw the demodog that took advantage of Billy turning his back, and jumped up to latch onto his shoulder.

Billy cried out in pain and shock, twisting around to try and throw it off. Steve took the bat, paint can and all, and took a swing at it.

#

"Go to my place," Billy hissed as he lowered himself into the passenger side of the car, pressing a hand to his shoulder. He hadn't let Steve help him get in, and had only reluctantly handed over his keys. "It's closer than yours, all up at the fancy end of town."

Steve nodded grimly and started the engine. He'd have preferred to go to his place; the first aid kit he'd been slowly building up out of worry about shit like this happening over the past few months was pretty extensive by now. But Billy was right. The Hargrove house was closer, Billy was bleeding and Steve could barely keep his hands from shaking on the wheel, and there were seven dead demodogs left on the floor of the hardware store to worry about. It was a no-brainer. "Your dad - "

"Him and Susan always drive a couple towns over for dinner on Thursdays," Billy said through his teeth, eyes screwed shut and head tipped back against the headrest, "they won't be there." There was yellow paint splattered across his cheek and clumped in his hair.

"Okay." Steve sped up a little once they were back on the main road. He hadn't stopped to look closely at how bad Billy was hurt. His jacket was dark and Steve couldn't see any blood, but he could smell it, warm and metallic, and grained into the creases of his hands where he'd helped drag Billy to his feet. He wondered if this was how Billy'd felt the night he'd driven a barely conscious Steve to the Byers' after he'd nearly got his ribs broken by a pack of straggler demodogs. He hoped not, it fucking sucked.

Billy's dad and stepmom might not have been home, but Max was. The thought honestly hadn't occurred to Steve until they were



through the door - Billy having grudgingly allowed Steve to help him out of the car, arm around him to keep him steady - and she was standing right there in the hallway in blue spotty pyjamas, holding a box of cereal.

"What the hell happened to you?" She frowned at them, arms folded and obviously worried, but her concern was outweighed by suspicion. Steve was thankful that at the very least she knew, as everyone else did, that he and Billy were 'friends' now, and didn't question that it was him in particular helping a blood-smeared Billy through the front door. Small mercies. "And why the fuck are you all yellow?"

"And why the fuck aren't you in bed?" Billy retorted. "It's a fucking school night, Maxine."

"Shit," Steve said, scrambling for an explanation that would get them through this mess as quick as possible, "look Max - "

"Fucking demodog sons of fucking bitches," Billy hissed when Steve jostled his shoulder as he moved to shut the front door behind them.

"Sorry, sorry!" he winced and carefully righted them again. "Yeah, yeah I know. They suck."

"Wait," Max said, eyes wide, looking at Steve in disbelief, "he *knows* about this now?"

"Yeah," Steve said. There was no way he could dig them out of it after that, so he might as well go with it. He was sort of surprised she didn't know already, actually, what with Will, Joyce and Hopper at least knowing about the last time he and Billy had gotten tangled up with demodogs. "We ran into a bunch of demodogs at the old hardware store - "

"Fuck off Maxine and mind your own business," Billy said, pale and snarling, "it's just a little bite. We both know I've had worse."

"If you weren't about to drip blood all over the hallway, I'd tell you to stop being such a jerk," Steve said, "but you are, and I'm fucking worried about you, so I'm gunna let it slide just this once." He looked to Max instead. "You guys got some first aid shit?"

"Yeah," she said, looking a little more worried again as it dawned on her just how much Billy was leaning on Steve, the blood on both of their hands along with the paint and demodog goop, "the bathroom."

"He'll be fine, okay?" Steve tried to smile. "Just needs a little fixing up."

"He can also fucking hear you," Billy drawled, "it bit my shoulder not my ear, you dicks."

"Just... give us a minute Max, yeah?" He knew Billy would be a difficult patient, but he also knew having Max there to witness it would probably only make him more insistent he didn't need the help.

"Ugh *fine*," she huffed and stomped off back to where the TV was blaring and flickering in the living room, but not without one last tight-lipped, worried frown over her shoulder.

Billy let Steve steer him towards the bathroom, but shook him off once they were inside and sat heavily on the edge of the tub, looking completely wrung out. Steve opened the bathroom cabinet to hunt for what he needed, Billy wincing as he shrugged off his jacket, still spattered yellow, and dropped it to the floor. Steve swore when he saw the state of the shirt underneath. Usually he liked Billy in a white t shirt, pale against his tan skin and tight across his chest, but the blood steadily soaking across it was sort of ruining it for him.

"C'mon baby, let's get this off."

"Any excuse Harrington, Jesus," Billy said, his attempted leering falling a bit short, but obediently lifted his arm and let Steve gently pull the ruined shirt over his head.

It... didn't look great. But once Steve had cleaned away the blood smeared all over his shoulder, he realised with some relief that it wasn't as bad as it looked. The little tears and puncture marks were numerous, scattered all over the expanse of Billy's shoulder, collar bone around to shoulder blade, base of his neck to the ball of his shoulder joint, some deeper than others, but hopefully none that needed stitching. The shallower ones had stopped bleeding, just a few

around the edges where the demodog had gotten a better hold of him were still sluggishly seeping blood. Steve dug out the half-empty bottle of antiseptic and got to work.

"Don't fucking scare me like that you dick," he said quietly as he cleaned him up.

Billy flinched at the sting. "I didn't do it on purpose, dipshit."

"Yeah yeah, keep still." Steve ducked a little lower to try and get a better look at what he was doing. There was no good angle, the bathroom light cast a shadow in just the wrong place no matter where he stood.

"At least I'm fucking conscious," Billy said.

"It's not a contest, jeez." And okay, Steve didn't remember an awful lot of the night Billy had driven him to the Byers' after their last run in with demodogs, between the shock and the painkillers Joyce had rustled up. But what he did remember was waking up on and off to a view of the Byers' sitting room ceiling, Billy pressed hot along his side and whispering all kinds of crap, low and soothing into the crook of his neck, to get him to go back to sleep.

Done with the antiseptic, Steve straightened up to have another look over Billy's shoulder, double checking for any cuts he might have missed. There was a smudge of dried blood just under Billy's ear, and he wiped it away. His eye caught on Billy's earring, bright under the shitty lighting of the Hargroves' bathroom, and Steve lingered momentarily on the irrelevant and really not helpful right now thought that he'd like to buy him another.

He looked... well, he looked just as crappy as you'd expect someone to after a near death experience involving some kind of vicious alien species, honestly. But hey, Steve was sure he didn't exactly look his best right now either. He smoothed gauze over the worst of the bite marks, aware of Billy's eye on him as he did so. They would heal okay, he thought, though were going to pull like a bitch every time Billy moved while they were doing so. He didn't envy him that.

"You got any painkillers in that cabinet?" he said. "You're going to need 'em."

"I love you."

Steve looked up from where he was taping down the last corner of gauze, hand stilling and eye fixed on the dingy bathroom tile behind Billy's head. "What?" He blinked, and moved back to look down at him properly.

Billy looked as though he wanted to snatch the words back, wanted to shove Steve away and run from the room, but eventually his mouth tightened in determination, and he met Steve's eye. There was still a smudge of yellow paint across his cheek. "You heard."

That last time someone had said that to him, they hadn't meant it. And he was past all that now, really. He loved Nance all the more after they'd somehow come through their messy break up as friends, just in a different way. But there was still a little bit of him that couldn't quite believe it was possible that Billy meant it. Really though, it didn't matter, because Steve loved him too, would love him whether Billy meant it or not, as stupid as that might be. Loved him enough that he wanted Billy to hear it.

"I love you too."

And it was completely fucking ridiculous that he'd just said that to Billy for the first time while he had puncture wounds in his shoulder from a fucking demodog and they were under the crappy buzzing yellow light in the Hargrove's bathroom and Max was down the hall and it was literally the least romantic setting Steve could possibly think of. But it was Billy, and it was him, and it somehow made sense. Fuck it.

He ducked down to kiss him, careful not to touch his shoulder, hands on the back of his neck. Billy stayed sitting on the edge of the bathtub, Steve moving closer again to stand between his spread knees, fingers creeping up into Billy's hair, tugging gently, sucking soft on Billy's lower lip. Billy whined low in his throat, hands shoved up Steve's shirt and cold on his back.

"Steve," Billy said, low and rough and half lost between kisses, "Steve."

"I've got you, baby."

He still felt stretched, pulled taught with worry ever since he'd looked on in horror as that fucking monster had suck its teeth into Billy's flesh, but instead of feeling that tension across his shoulders, he pushed it out, out into his kisses and his fingers curled in Billy's hair, and Billy pushed it right back, the two of them holding each other together. They slowed eventually, the relief at making it out alive once again seeping in and leaving them drained, Steve sagging slightly and back protesting at the awkward angle, kisses softer, Steve's eyes closed and nose against Billy's cheek.

"Hey guys, I - "

Steve's tongue was literally in Billy's mouth when he heard the door bang open. He winced, ready for the utter shitshow that was inevitably about to play out, and pulled back just enough to see Max standing in the bathroom doorway.

"Uh, hey."

She was staring at them, mouth dropped open wide, hair in its usual curtain over her shoulder. "What the hell?"

"What the fuck Maxine?" Billy said, his lips pink and slick where Steve had been licking at them. "You just fucking barge in here without knocking - "

"Well I didn't know you'd be - " she turned red, and Steve felt a tiny bit bad for her, "doing *that*."

Steve snorted, Billy pinched his side. "Still, fucking knock. Jesus. How many fucking times times do I have to tell you, dipshit?"

"You should have locked the door," she said sullenly.

"No, you - "

"Guys just," Steve cut in. He'd spent enough time around the two of them to know that shouting at each other was pretty much just how they ran; it didn't necessarily mean they were angry, but it wasn't exactly helping either. "Stop. Max, what did you want?"

"Oh," she blinked, the scowl she was directing at her brother lessening slightly. "I thought I should let the party know. About the demodogs, I mean," she added quickly. "I called Mrs Byers. She says to get the others, and come over. I just wanted to tell you."

For a second, Steve was mad. Annoyed that they never seemed to be able to just get on with things without everybody else knowing, and dragging themselves into it too. It was hard for them all not to live in each other's pockets, to some extent, when it came to Upside Down stuff. But then he realised he probably wouldn't have sat by and done nothing either in her place. That and they needed to sort out some sort of clean up in the hardware store, and Billy definitely wasn't up to that right now. "Okay. That was actually a pretty good call," he gave her a small smile, "thanks. I sorta forgot about everybody else, what with this idiot getting himself hurt."

"Dick," Billy pinched his hip again, harder.

The prizewinning glare Max had been giving Billy flickered away again, and she smiled at them like they were the funniest thing she'd ever seen. "So... are you guys a thing? Like, are you *dating*?"

Steve wanted to jump in with a firm *hell yeah*, but he felt like Billy should be the one to answer her, so he waited. He looked up at Steve, smiled a little, the soft sleepy-eyed smile he sometimes wore when Steve had just said something he considered particularly dopey. Though that was probably the fucking mess of an evening they'd had, in part. His hand was still on Steve's hip, and he rubbed his thumb in slow circles, catching on the waistband of his jeans. "Yeah."

"Huh," she said, and for a second Steve wondered if he'd read her wrong, if she had a problem with it after all. But then - "I wondered why you were being less of an asshole lately." She grinned brightly at Steve. "Thanks, Steve."

"Fuck off Maxine," Billy grabbed an orange toothbrush from the edge of the sink and threw it at her, but he was smiling too and it missed her by a good two feet, so Steve didn't really think he meant it. "I'll fucking kill you if you tell."

"No you won't," she said, and ducked back out into the hall, laughing

as she went back to the sitting room.

**Author's Note:**

He would probably need more medical attention than that, I know. This isn't really how I'd picture them saying I love you for the first time, but the idea was cute. I think I've found my comfort area, and it is soft boys fighting monsters.

Also this series is slowly turning into party members finding out about them one by one woops. Since that seems to be the case, any thoughts on who should be next if I do another?